

DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION FACTS

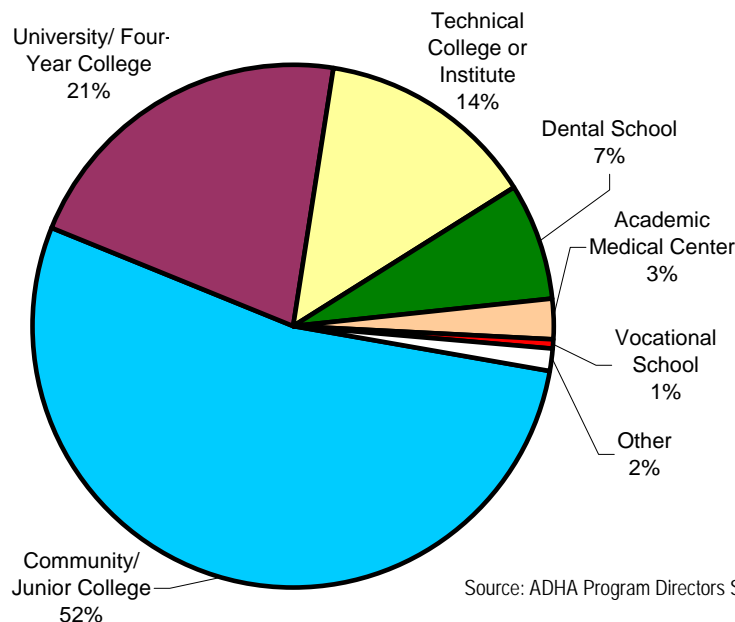


Dental hygienists are licensed oral health professionals who focus on preventing and treating oral diseases in order to protect the oral cavity, and also to protect the patients' total health. They are graduates of accredited dental hygiene education programs in colleges and universities, and must pass a written national board examination and a clinical examination to obtain state licensure.

Dental Hygiene Education Programs

- A dental hygiene education requires an average of 86 credit hours for an associate degree, or 122 credit hours for a baccalaureate degree.¹
- The majority of programs (86%) are semester-based and 40% include summer study.¹
- Few programs (15%) offer a part-time curriculum and 36% offer at least some opportunities for distance learning. Master's degree and degree completion programs are most likely to offer distance learning.¹
- Dental Hygiene entry-level programs are accredited by the **Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)**. ([CODA Website](#))
- Dental hygiene degrees are offered in a variety of institutional settings.

Type of Sponsor Institution of Dental Hygiene Education Programs, 2006



Over 6,000 student dental hygienists **graduate per year** from accredited entry-level dental hygiene programs nationally, with opportunities for advanced degrees through *degree completion* and/or *master degree* programs.² September 2009 programs³ include:

- 309 entry-level dental hygiene programs ([Entry Level List](#))
- 60 degree completion programs ([Degree Completion List](#))
- 20 master degree programs ([Master Degree List](#))

DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION FACTS



- **Entry-level programs** prepare graduates for the clinical practice of dental hygiene. These include certificate, associate degree and baccalaureate degree programs.
- **Degree Completion programs** are designed for licensed dental hygienists who have completed their professional education and earned a certificate or associate's degree. The baccalaureate degree awarded through these programs can be in dental hygiene or a related area.
- **Master Degree programs** prepare graduates for careers as educators, administrators and researchers. 100% of programs include research methods/application, 87% include leadership, 47% include content such as educational theory and methods, statistics, epidemiology, basic sciences and clinical practice. One-half of all programs reported their current students are interested in teaching.¹

**For a map illustrating the type and number of dental hygiene programs by state, please visit:
http://www.adha.org/download/eds/edu/Ed_Program_Map*

Entry-Level Dental Hygiene Curricula:

- Accredited dental hygiene programs require an average of **2,794 clock hours of curriculum**. This includes **654 clock hours of supervised clinical dental hygiene instruction**.²
 - general education courses including English, speech, psychology and sociology
 - basic science courses including general chemistry, anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, pathology, nutrition, and pharmacology
 - dental science courses including dental anatomy, head and neck anatomy, oral embryology and histology, oral pathology, radiography, periodontology, pain control and dental materials
 - dental hygiene science courses including oral health education/preventive counseling, patient management, clinical dental hygiene, community dental health, medical and dental emergencies, and supervised instruction in pre-clinical and clinical practice.
- 54% of all programs use extended clinical facilities beyond their campus and 80% require students to perform a clinical rotation in a community or public health setting.¹

Dental Hygiene Students¹

- 97% female
- 88.6% non-Hispanic white
- Considerable proportion of students enter dental hygiene after working or pursuing education in another field.

Dental Hygiene Faculty¹

- 88% program directors are dental hygienists
- 25% of program directors hold a doctoral or professional degree
- 24% full professor; 39% assistant or associate professor
- 51% tenured faculty position

Top Issues Reported by Dental Hygiene Program Directors¹

- 32% reported recruitment of new faculty a primary concern
- 28% reported fitting new content into the curriculum a primary concern
- Competition for qualified faculty and budgetary concerns were noted as current and future issues

DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION FACTS



Preparation and Admission to Entry-Level Programs

- Admission requirements and prerequisites vary from institution to institution, but generally include:
 - high school diploma or GED
 - high school courses in mathematics, chemistry, biology, English
 - minimum "C" average in high school
 - college entrance test scores
 - typically up to 40 credit hours of prerequisite college courses in chemistry, English, speech, psychology and sociology
 - dependent on the institution, a personal interview, dexterity test, and/or essay
- 77% of dental hygiene programs use **college science GPA** as part of the criteria in admissions procedures; 73% include **overall college GPA** as admissions criteria.²
- The majority of dental hygiene programs (93%) have **limited enrollment**.¹
 - Admission to a program is typically highly competitive. In 2006, programs reported 25% of students applying for admission to associate programs were admitted, while 33% of students applying to baccalaureate programs were admitted.
- 50% of programs responded that they offer **advanced placement**.¹

Differentiation of Degrees

- **Both** associate and baccalaureate degrees are considered **entry level to the profession**; either prepares graduates for the clinical practice of dental hygiene in a private dental office or public clinic.
 - In addition to clinical practice, graduates with a baccalaureate or higher degree have the opportunity for alternative career pathways in education, administration, public health and research.
- Associate programs offer an average of 2,666 **total clock hours of instruction**, while baccalaureate programs offer an average of 3,093 total clock hours of instruction.²
 - Dental hygiene programs awarding associate degrees offer about the same average number of didactic and laboratory clock hours devoted to patient care as programs that award baccalaureate degrees.
 - Baccalaureate programs, on average, offer more clinical clock hours devoted to patient care than associate programs (607 versus 535).
 - On average, baccalaureate programs provide notably more clock hours of instruction in written communication, chemistry, oral health education/preventive counseling, and patient management.
- 47% of all dental hygiene programs offer **elective courses** and 12% offer **specialization tracks**. Baccalaureate programs and master's level degree programs are more likely to offer both elective courses and specialization tracks than associate degree programs.¹
- The **average estimated total cost of tuition and fees** for an associate degree is \$30,155; for a baccalaureate degree, \$40,207²; and a master's degree, \$23,133.⁴

References:

1. American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) 2006 Dental Hygiene Education Program Director Survey, 2008, ADHA, http://www.adha.org/downloads/AD-exec_report-2008.pdf
2. American Dental Association 2007-08 Survey of Allied Dental Education, 2008, American Dental Association (ADA) Survey Center
3. American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), 2009, http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/programs/search_dahlt_us.asp
4. American Dental Hygienists' Association, 2009, Division of Education

DH LICENSURE, EMPLOYMENT & SALARY INFORMATION



Dental Hygiene Licensure

In order to practice in the U.S., dental hygiene graduates must obtain a license. Dental hygiene licenses are granted by each individual state. There are several steps required to obtain a license:

- Graduation from an accredited dental hygiene program
- Successful completion of the written National Board Dental Hygiene Examination ([National Board Examination](#))
- Successful completion of a regional or state clinical board examination ([Clinical Board Examinations](#))

Once these steps have been completed, an applicant for licensure must then contact the state licensing authority in the state where he/she wishes to practice. As licensing requirements vary from state to state, it is **necessary to contact each licensing authority in a given state for its specific application requirements and procedures**. Examples of additional types of requirements may be needed for licensure include: successful completion of a jurisprudence exam; proof of CPR certification; letters of recommendation from dentists licensed in the state in which applicants wish to obtain licensure; official transcripts from high school and colleges attended, official confirmation of the absence of a criminal record, and official letters from the boards of dentistry where licensure is held.

Typically state boards have the authority to deny a license to an applicant who has committed an act for which the board could revoke a license. **Persons convicted of a felony or serious misdemeanor may be refused licensure**, as well as those disciplined on the license application about prior convictions, discipline, etc. Most states conduct background checks on a case by case basis, and may take into consideration the seriousness of the offense and other factors in making the decision to grant licensure.

Employment

Dental hygienists can apply their professional knowledge and skills in a variety of public and private settings as clinicians, educators, researchers, administrators, managers, health advocates, and consultants. Clinical dental hygienists may be employed in a variety of healthcare settings including private dental offices, schools, public health clinics, hospitals, managed care organizations, correctional institutions, or nursing homes.

Salaries/Benefits

Earnings vary by geographical location, employment setting, and years of experience. Dental hygienists may be paid on an hourly, daily, salary, or commission basis. For specific wage information, visit the: ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)); ([America's Career InfoNet](#)) or ([Employment Benefit Research Institute](#)).

Benefits vary substantially by practice setting and may be contingent upon full-time employment. Dental hygienists who work for school systems, public health agencies, the Federal Government, or State agencies often have substantial benefits.

Information compiled by:

*The American Dental Hygienists' Association, Division of Education
444 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 3400, Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 440-8900 x 230
education@adha.net*